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Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/122, provides an overview of the work of the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery, in particular the recommendations for grants to beneficiary organizations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the fund at its twenty-second session, held in Geneva from 27 November to 1 December 2017. It also provides information on other recommendations adopted by the Board.

* A/73/150.

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I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/122, by which it established the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery. It contains the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the fund at its twenty-second session, held in Geneva from 27 November to 1 December 2017. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved the recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General on 19 December 2017.

B. Mandate of the fund

2. In line with resolution 46/122, the fund was established with the purpose of extending humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. The fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations, private or public entities and individuals.

C. Administration of the fund and Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the fund through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with the advice of a Board of Trustees and in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

4. The Board of Trustees is composed of five members with relevant experience in the field of human rights and, in particular, issues of contemporary forms of slavery. They serve in their personal capacity and are appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution. The Board is currently composed of Danwood Mzikenge Chirwa (Malawi), Renu Rajbhandari (Nepal), Leonardo Sakamoto (Brazil), Georgina Vaz Cabral (France) and Nevena Vučković Šahović (Serbia) who has served as Chair of the Board since its twentieth session. Ms. Rajbhandari will serve as Chair of the Board in the inter-sessional period leading to the next session of the Board, in 2018.

II. Management of grants

A. Admissibility criteria

5. In accordance with the mandate of the fund, as set out in General Assembly resolution 46/122, the beneficiaries of assistance from the fund are individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the fund's guidelines. Project proposals should be aimed at the delivery of assistance services to beneficiaries who are victims of contemporary forms of slavery and, when applicable, members of their families. As indicated in the fund's guidelines, contemporary forms of slavery that qualify for project grants include traditional slavery, serfdom, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, the worst forms of child labour, forced and early marriage, the sale of wives and inherited widows, trafficking in persons and human organs, sexual slavery, the sale of children, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in armed conflict.

6. Priority in allocating grants is accorded to projects implemented by civil society organizations that aim at providing rehabilitation, reparation, empowerment and integration services for victims of contemporary forms of slavery through direct assistance. This may include medical, psychological, social, legal, humanitarian and educational assistance, vocational or skills training or other assistance in support of an independent livelihood. Detailed information on the types of assistance provided to victims through the projects financed by the fund, as well as on their impact on the lives of the identified beneficiaries, is available from the OHCHR website.[1]

7. By 1 March 2017, the deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2018, the fund had received 73 applications. After the applications were pre-screened by the secretariat of the fund, 71 were declared admissible and were examined by the Board at its twenty-second session.

8. The deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2019 was 1 March 2018. Admissible project applications will be examined by the Board at its twenty-third session. In 2019, priority will continue to be given to project proposals intended to assist women and children victims of slavery as a consequence of conflicts and humanitarian crises.

B. Monitoring and evaluation by the secretariat of the fund

9. At its twenty-second session, the Board was presented with 71 admissible applications for project grants that would be awarded for activities to be implemented from 1 January to 31 December 2018. Before the session, 43 of the project proposals had been evaluated through on-site visits by staff of the secretariat of the fund, OHCHR country and regional offices, human rights components of peacekeeping missions and members of the Board. On-site pre-screening and technical evaluation visits to applicant organizations are a crucial aspect of the fund. The visits provide an opportunity for the direct verification of new applicants, monitoring of activities supported by the fund over a number of years and the provision of feedback to grantees. For cost-efficiency purposes, on-site visits are coordinated by OHCHR, with visits undertaken on behalf of the United Nations voluntary fund for victims of torture.

III. Financial situation of the fund

10. Notwithstanding the fundraising and outreach efforts of the members of the Board and the secretariat of the fund, underfunding remains to be an issue. Since 2002, the fund has received a total of $8.5 million in contributions from Member States, which represents an average yearly income of $500,000. A peak of contributions was observed in 2009 with an income amounting to $886,000. To meaningfully fulfil its mandate and adequately respond to the needs of victims, the fund would require at least $2 million in contributions each year. The contributions received in 2017 for 2018 covered barely 30 per cent of that target. For 2019, the fund aims at reaching the symbolic ceiling of $1 million, encouraged by the positive feedback received on its operations by an increasing number of State representatives.

11. The table below shows the contributions and pledges received in 2017.

[1] See www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund.

Contributions and pledges received in 2017

(United States dollars)

Donor	*Amount*	*Date of receipt*
Australia	152 887	20 December 2017
Germany	229 888	28 June and 29 November 2017
Holy See	2 500	22 December 2017
India	25 000	26 January 2017
Ireland	5 313	23 December 2017
Luxembourg	33 595	1 March and 24 October 2017
Republic of Korea	25 000	30 August 2017
Saudi Arabia	75 000	26 May 2017
South Africa	6 327	30 March 2017
Spain	41 273	30 October 2017
Turkey	10 000	12 September 2017
Total	**606 785**	

IV. Twenty-second session of the Board of Trustees

12. The twenty-second session of the Board of Trustees was held in Geneva from 27 November to 1 December 2017. During the session on 1 December 2017, to mark the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, the fund convened an expert panel on the importance of specialized rehabilitation to enable victims of modern slavery practices to integrate into society and end the cycle of abuse. The panel, which included former victims of modern slavery, showcased the concrete experiences of grantees of the fund in the field of rehabilitation and the critical role it plays towards the empowerment of victims.

13. Furthermore, in line with the mission statement adopted on 26 November 2016 (A/71/272, para. 27), the Board continued to pursue closer coordination with other actors relevant to the field of contemporary forms of slavery. Against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Board had fruitful exchanges with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council (in particular, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences and OHCHR staff supporting the special procedure mandates on the sale of children and on trafficking in persons) and the secretariat in Vienna of the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children and the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. Members of the Board are of the view that only a close cooperation among relevant mandates and mechanisms will ensure a more effective response to victims of contemporary forms of slavery.

A. Grant-making recommendations

14. Following a thorough intersessional evaluation of admissible project proposals by the secretariat, the Board, at its twenty-second session, was presented with 71 applications for project grants, amounting to $1.9 million requested for the assistance of victims of contemporary forms of slavery worldwide. The Board accorded priority to the review of project proposals that had been highly recommended for funding by

the secretariat. Through a competitive review based on both geographic and thematic criteria, it recommended the approval of 29 project grants, totalling $503,500. The recommendations were approved by the High Commissioner on behalf of the Secretary-General on 19 December 2017. Five additional highly performing projects proposals (totalling $80,900) could not be financed owing to insufficient funding.

15. In 2018, through the 29 grants, the fund is expected to assist non-governmental organizations in 27 countries, as follows: 6 projects in Asia, 8 in Africa, 4 in Eastern Europe, 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 6 in Western Europe and other States. Through the awarded projects, more than 10,000 victims are expected to be provided with redress and rehabilitation services after having been subjected to contemporary forms of slavery, such as the worst forms of child labour, traditional slavery, bonded and forced labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons for labour and sexual exploitation. For example, in 2018, the fund will partner with an organization to implement a project in the Sayaxché region of Guatemala to provide social and legal support to 300 Maya Kekchi victims of forced labour as well as the dispossession of lands and environmental contamination generated by the palm oil industry. An organization in Nigeria will implement a project to provide humanitarian assistance, counselling and social support to deported boys and young women trafficked to Europe for sexual exploitation and forced labour. A Nepalese organization will provide social and legal support to landless bonded labourers to grant them access to identity documents and allow them to register for government plans. In Iraq, the fund will renew its support to an organization in Erbil that provides legal assistance to victims of sexual slavery and forced labour.

16. Figures I and II illustrate the breakdown, by region and type of contemporary slavery, of the 29 grants approved in 2018.

Figure I
Grants awarded in 2018, by region

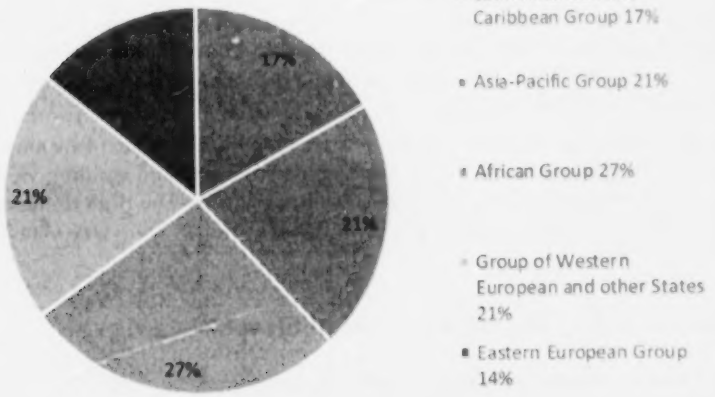
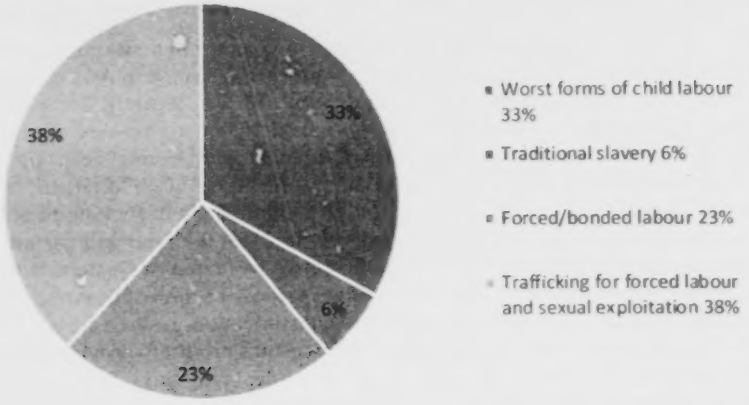


Figure II
Grants awarded in 2018, by type of contemporary slavery



B. Policy recommendations

17. During its twenty-second session, the Board also reviewed its working methods to align them fully with the fund's mission statement adopted on 26 November 2015 (see A/72/229, para. 12). In particular, the Board recommended that, as of 2018, annual grants should range between $15,000 and $30,000. In addition, a two-cycle gap should be applied to project proposals that have been evaluated as inadmissible and/or not recommended during the pre-screening phase by the secretariat. Finally, the Board recommended stricter implementation of the rule regarding a one-cycle gap for projects having been awarded funding for five consecutive years. The Board also recommended the annual holding of a public event in commemoration of the abolition of slavery, as a way to share knowledge and best practices in the field of rehabilitation and redress for victims of slavery.

18. Furthermore, for the 2019 call for project proposals, the Board recommended that priority be given to proposals intended to assist women and children victims of slavery as a consequence of conflicts and humanitarian crises. The High Commissioner approved all of the recommendations, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on 19 December 2017.

C. International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

Expert Panel on rehabilitation for victims of slavery

19. On the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, on 1 December 2017, the fund convened an expert panel to discuss the theme "Rehabilitation for victims of modern slavery". The following participated on the panel: Peggy Hicks, Director, Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division, OHCHR; Renu Rajbhandari, medical expert and member of the Board of Trustees of the fund; grantees of the fund, including Marcela Loaiza, former victim of sexual slavery and founder of Fundación Marcela Loaiza (Colombia), Suamhirs Piraino-Guzman, former victim of child sexual slavery, and behavioural

health specialist for the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (United States of America); Issa Kouyaté, President, Maison de la Gare (Senegal); and Eileen Walsh, clinical psychologist, Helen Bamber Foundation (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). The above-listed organizations and rehabilitation centres are all current grantees of the fund. The event was attended by representatives from Member States, civil society, United Nations entities and the general public. Australia, Germany and the Republic of Korea contributed financially towards the organization of the panel.

20. Ms. Hicks highlighted that, despite its absolute prohibition under international law for almost a century, it was estimated that over 40 million people, including 10 million children, still lived in enslavement, stripped of their rights, dignity and humanity. Torture persisted in many countries across all regions. She emphasized that the eradication of slavery required concerted and global action, recalling target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, according to which Member States were specifically required to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. Ms. Hicks stressed that insufficient resources were placed into programmes for the rehabilitation for victims of slavery.

21. The grantees of the fund provided moving and direct accounts of the work carried out, with the support of the fund, to assist victims of slavery through various rehabilitation programmes, including for legal, psychosocial and economic empowerment. The presentations of the panellists were followed by a public debate. The poignant written and video testimonies of the victims and experts participating in the panel are available on the fund's website.

V. How to contribute to the fund

22. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities are invited to contribute to the fund. Donors should indicate "for the slavery fund, account SH" on a payment order. For more information on how to contribute and further details about the fund, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery:

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United Nations
CH 1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
E-mail: slaveryfund@ohchr.org
Tel: +41 22 917 9376
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VI. Conclusions and recommendations

23. **The Board of Trustees, jointly with the secretariat, has multiplied outreach initiatives to increase the visibility of the fund and enhance coordination with other actors involved in the eradication of all forms of slavery, including the special procedure mandates and the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.**

24. **In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States committed to combating inequalities and discrimination and to leave no one**

behind. However, the discussions of the expert panel on rehabilitation facilitated by the Board of the fund at its twenty-second session clearly highlighted the scarcity of resources being placed into programmes for the rehabilitation and empowerment of victims of slavery.

25. Member States and other stakeholders, in particular the private sector, are urged to contribute to the fund as a concrete manifestation of their commitment to the elimination of slavery and fulfilment of target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Fund would need to receive $1 million on a yearly basis in order to be able to respond more adequately to the requests it receives for assistance.